



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

He stands at the door and knocks. He will come in and sup with every man who pulls the latchstring. He will stay in the heart, in the home, at the plow, in the factory, in the editor's sanctum, in the engineer's cab, in the office of the captain of industry, in the Senate of the United States, in the governor's chair, if the occupant will live by the rule of the road, the narrow way that leads to righteousness here in this workaday world of toil and trouble. Kaiserism has gone. Bolshevism will go if Christ is allowed to come to the cottage of the

cottar, the hut of the miner, the palace of the money-lord, the office of the statesman. A little leaven will leaven the whole lump. A few live Christians who are in earnest and unafraid can revolutionize any community and clean up any city. The social program of Christ is the world's hope in the new dawn that has come. But every man must build over against his own house, make his home a heaven for wife and children, and see that his neighbors have the privilege of living in a colony of heaven here on earth.

THE PROPHET-CRITICS

CHESTER WARREN QUIMBY

Fargo College, Fargo, North Dakota

Just as we think that an unintelligent use of the Bible has been abandoned and that everybody uses the Scriptures in a historical way, there suddenly breaks forth a recrudescence of the older sort of teaching. We have to begin all over again, as it were, with each new generation. But we are farther ahead than we were a generation ago. Truth is already prevailing, and the Bible is better understood in ever-widening circles.

The old Bible was a magical book, fearfully and wonderfully made. Every letter, every comma, and every period were put there by God himself. It was a very plain book, so plain that the wayfaring fool need not err therein. For the Bible said things, and it meant exactly what it said. The preacher inquired very little into questions of history, customs, and contexts. If some things seemed strange or contradictory, his was not to reason why, but as he read so he believed, never doubting. "The Bible says so" was reason enough. For him the Bible was an encyclopedia

of texts to hang sermons upon. With these texts he put to flight armies of heretics, built for himself systems of doctrine and theologies, and smote the consciences of sinners. Sometimes the preacher chose a whole passage and explained it for the edification of his congregation. The Bible then became a book of devotion to build up and enrich Christian character. The vices of saints were condemned and the virtues of salvation enforced. If, perchance, some parts were absolutely barren, or exceedingly obnoxious to the moral sense, then God must surely be speaking in figures

of speech, and these places were treated as allegories. So the waste places of the Bible were made to blossom as the rose, and the dross, washed in the alchemy of allegory, became golden with spiritual truth. And always for the preacher the Bible was the handiwork, the voice and heart of God.

Still there were some things in the Bible hard to be understood. Literalism and allegory failed to illuminate them. They shone black from the shining pages. One looked wistfully at them and said, "I believe it all, all—what I can understand and what I cannot. It is God's book. Some day He will reveal these dark sayings unto us." And we looked longingly for a Prophet-to-Come who should walk with us in the way, and make known unto us all that Moses, the prophets, and the apostles did write—some spectacular prophet with a marvelous revelation. In the fulness of time God sent the critics, and our dream was shattered. The Jews looked for a king, and there came a carpenter. We looked for a prophet, and there came the critics, and for a long time they were despised and rejected of men, and we cast them out. Aye, and they were prophets!

They were men of *patience*. They toiled over dictionaries and vocabularies, and hunted up etymologies and root meanings. They compared all the manuscripts, weighed the thousand upon thousand of different readings therein to find the exact and true one. They took journeys to the Holy Land and the Orient and picked and dug. They studied history, geography, geology, archaeology, if in any wise they might find some straying bit of knowledge.

They became linguists and talked the ancient languages of the Babylonians, the Chaldees, and Egyptians. They learned modern Syrian, Arabic, and Aramaic, and with these together they worked and plied their knowledge to understand what the Book might have to say. They studied customs, ancient habits, manners, etiquette, and religious rites of a hundred sorts, so that, perchance, some pages of the Book might take on a richer meaning. At these tasks they toiled all their lives. They re-read the Bible a thousand times through comparing scripture with scripture until its words were etched into their memory. Year after year of dull, patient toil, without applause, with little fame, and no thanks. There is nothing more thrilling than the critic's toiling patience over his Bible.

The critics were men of *courage*. The Bible they took up was a very old book. It had thousands of years of history back of it. Traditions had long said how it was to be interpreted, and most of its passages had been given a definite meaning. And all the saints had loved it. From David until now they had found it the eternal fountain. It was their inspiration, their hope and encouragement, their comfort and solace. To break through such things required a humble and lofty sort of courage. But the critics did it. They were scorned, they were called haters of the Faith and destroyers of the Bible, the very Book they most loved, and into whose pages they poured their life's blood and labor. But they flinched not. They demolished the Bible as a simple, dictated book. They put question marks after some of its authors and historical accounts. They

questioned some miracles and nullified many long and honorable interpretations. They fixed impassable bounds. The preacher has to go carefully now. His texts and passages for exposition must be chosen with care. The Bible is no more a toy of the imagination. The critics have stopped that. Authors had intents and purposes when they wrote their books, and the critics have discovered them. The preacher can no more suit his whim. He cannot pad his discourse with "I imagine" and "I fancy." A text is not to be wrested from its setting any more than a jewel from its ring. It cannot be glibly and verbally quoted any longer. Its author had a meaning, and that meaning holds. It takes courage to overthrow prejudices. Revolutions require courage, and revolutions in religion and religious literature require a double courage. But the critics were steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the faith, and ever seeking the truth until they found it.

And they were men of *devotion*. Only a great love and passion could hold a man true through long years of wearisome study and microscopic examination of details, under knifing criticism and conservative hate. Sometimes a black sheep showed in their midst. Sometimes one got excited and said some foolish things. Some of them went to extremes. They made mistakes. They were blessedly human and had their weaknesses. But the major portion of them, even of the most rabid, were men of devotion. Where is there among the annals of the saints higher consecration to endure all things for the truth's sake? For they invested their only life, their one life, in loyal

devotion, seeking the truth in the Bible.

Patience, courage, devotion—these three. Such valors together can do miracles. Great is the work the critics have achieved. They have killed Ingersoll. If anyone will listen to the "Old Time Religionists" they will hear wailings and lamentations. These people sorrow and sob that in our day no Ingersoll has appeared. They flay the critics and say that now we are all, all, children of Ingersoll. In the first part of their contention they are right. The critics have killed Ingersoll and cut off his descendants from the face of the earth forever. Ingersoll scorned the Bible, its God, and its saints. Was not Abraham a liar and Jacob a thief? Noah was a drunken sot, Solomon a libertine, and Joshua would do to lead a Moslem charge. The psalmist was too often seething with hate, and a heaper of curses, ruled by hot revenge. Yet these men are saints, forsooth, and examples for our children. God Almighty was worse. He sponsored the evil. He sat Czar on Sinai, and thundered Law. In malice of revenge he slew all the first-born of Egypt; He had a pet nation, the Jews, and for them he tortured and destroyed other nations. He drenched Canaan in blood, overthrew cities, killed women and children in a slaughter of innocents, all for this pet nation which he had sent out in aggressive warfare to plunder, seize, rob, and kill. To such deeds this High God, on his high throne, looked on with approval saying, "Amen." But the critics have put an end to all this, and in a strange way. They put an end to it by *admitting the truth of the*

accusations. Then with their patience and learning they sent us to school and taught us with never-wearying tirelessness of the history of early Israel, of a Father-God rearing a childhood people with divine patience step by step through dishonesty, vice, war, and slavery into the full light of Jesus. The critics have killed Ingersoll. But Abraham remains in the faith, Jacob wrestles with his angel, Moses sobs over Israel's sins, and Solomon pays the penalty for his lust. They are still alive, these heroes of old. The critics have smitten not one. And above them stands God, grieving over their sin, teaching them higher living, and always watching over them "like as a Father."

Ingersoll is dead. Not a descendant has he among men. Let the critic be thanked. And let him be thanked that he has also blasted away the foundations of religious cranks and heretics. These sort are still with us, but they flourish only in the night of ignorance. Christian Science, Mormonism, Russellism—these sort are built on biblical foundations. However, their foundations are of sand. For their validity they need the old Bible with its picked, literal texts, its biased interpretations that ask no questions of authorship, contexts, or intended meanings. They had a premise to prove, and they ransacked the Scriptures seeking texts that would spell Q.E.D. to their propositions. Under the old literalisms they were easy to find and abundant in number. And none could gainsay them, for the "Bible said so." But the critics have halted them saying that the Bible is not a book of texts to be juggled with as shall suit any man's caprice. The

Bible is like any book; it has order, it has purpose, it has fixed meanings that are not to be shuffled at will. These religious vagaries and others have had to take notice. They are not dead. Some of them flourish in exuberant good health. But they do so by lies, by feeding their followers on the winds of false interpretations, and by shutting off the light of critical learning. Once a body studies his Bible in the light of criticism, if he is honest, he will flee their camp. The critics have not killed heresy. Their temples are still with us, numerous, great, and lordly, but they are founded upon the sand. And the religious crank can no more peddle his whim in the land. The Adventist, the Baptistalist, the extreme Sanctificationalist, and their like are doomed. Why? The answer is—the critics. For these extremists have suited the Bible to their notions. From cover to cover the Book is made to cry out. "On Saturday shall ye worship Me." Every text is microscopically examined, and if possible dyed the color of Saturday. Or diligent search is made, and under pressure the Bible yields up fountains of water and, "Thus and so must ye be baptized, and thus and so only, else ye be still in your sins." And the man blessed with a burning sense of the Spirit's power finds his texts by hundreds from Genesis to the Apocalypse. To him there is no other way whereby men can be saved. The heavens must open and the Spirit fall on him with the rushing of a mighty wind, else he is not sure of his salvation. These men fear the critic. For the critic begins to ask questions. He wants to know. What sort of a person is God?

Is he fussy over the hours of worship? Is he "at home" on Saturdays especially? What is real religion? Is it bedded in the minutiae of ritual? Is sin removed by a bath of some particular sort, or by a repenting heart? Is the Father to be begged and sought for a witness of himself, or is he waiting and anxious to bestow his Spirit? So the critic goes boring in, seeking what is essential, and turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. He smiles at the hobbies of these men, he recognizes the value of their teaching that God *is* to be worshiped, that the heart is to be washed of its sin, that a soul shall know of saving power, but he builds a wall; he limits the emphasis. Good men these cranks are and always to be with us, but from their one-sidedness the critic has saved us, declaring quietly that God requires justice, mercy, and a humble walking with himself.

The critics also walked among us as peacemakers. This may seem strange. It might be thought that they stirred and started the greatest strife in biblical history. In a sense this is so. But they settled a dispute more heated than any they may have precipitated. They were peacemakers, and without them religion surely would have suffered disaster. Science waged war on the Bible. It laid siege to Genesis, chapter 1. The earth was not made in a week. Geology said so, and creation tottered to falling. Biology, armed with evolution, drove Father Adam out of the Garden of Eden. Astronomy marched up and commanded Joshua's sun to move, and move it did. Biology summoned reinforcements, and Jonah's whale gave

up Jonah. The Bible was toppling to a fall. The supporter of the "Old Time Religion" rushed to the rescue. He allegorized. "No, no," he said, "it does not mean seven literal days of twenty-four hours each. It means, rather, seven periods of time, of long, long duration, here expressed as days. There is no conflict here." And so down the list he went. But after he had finished, the Bible still said that the earth *was* made in seven days, and that Joshua's sun *did* stand still, and no explanations could make it contrariwise. And science pressed the war the more hard, and followers of the faith trembled, alarmed. Then quiet and serene the critics took up the Book, studied it with amazing care, and after a while looked up at the warring parties with a confident smile, and asked, "What is the point of these stories?" The defender of the old faith spoke up quickly, stammered, and faltered. But the critics insisted still, "What is the point? What in these stories has caused them to endure these many centuries? What is the point?" And the defender, frantic for the old faith, could not answer. Nor could science. It could not think higher than rocks, earthquakes, stardust, the size of a whale's throat, and gravitation. "What is the point?" And science could not answer. Then the critic became peacemaker. He taught, and literalism and science sat at his feet. "Genesis I. A good God, a good creation, man made after the image of the good God." Literalism and science could not quarrel here. They could only worship the good God, enjoy the good creation and use it, and strive not to mar the image in which they

had been fashioned. Worship and work left no time for strife. "What is the point?" So through the Book they went, down through the miracles of Jesus, and at every sign of hostility between the foes they asked anew, "What is the point?" Science surrendered, and literalism's forces are few and feeble. And the reason? The critics have found *the point* and revealed the hidden things of God buried in these stories, so that more than ever they burn and glow with holy truth. Science and the Bible are at peace. The critics were the peacemakers. Blessed, blessed are the peacemakers.

Patience, courage, devotion—these have no limit of power. The critics have raised the dead. The prophets are alive again. Before the critics, who was Isaiah, Amos, or Jeremiah? They were but names of ancient men of whom tradition brought a few half-articulate whispers. There were, perhaps, regal marks about Isaiah. One heard, or thought he heard, the sobbing of Jeremiah, but little more. And so much of their books was barren waste. Doom upon doom, woe upon woe, without interest, without meaning, without inspiration. But in the fulness of time God sent his new prophets, the critics. They went to these ancient prophecies and studied, studied long and hard. They dug at problems of national alliances, political intrigues, social moralities and customs. What were the people doing? What were their occupations? How did they worship? What sort of men were the prophets? What did they do? What was their message? So the critics studied. And they learned—learned

that the long barren wastes of dooms, threats, woes, and warnings were rich in meaning for those times and ours; learned that these books laid bare the principles without which no civilization can long endure; learned that prophecy was burning with a social message of a God caring for the widow and orphan, who was wroth if the poor suffered oppression, and who hated the idle ease of wealth; learned of a God of politics insisting on just government where law was law, and justice, seasoned with mercy, reached the humble poor, where vice was suppressed, and the home life safe and clean; learned of religion pure and undefiled, out of a heart of gratitude, whose priests were ministers and shepherds of the people, and a God whose temple and name were the glory and center of life. This is the great glory of the critics. They have given us portraits and character sketches of the prophets so that they are no longer names but throbbing personalities, alive with life. There has been a resurrection, and the prophets are alive again. They walk among us. Energetic Amos thunders threats, insisting on obedience to law; broken-hearted Hosea pleads for loyal love to Jehovah; Isaiah sits among royalty and walks with regal power in Israel, counseling faith in God to a nation beset with foes, and doing the work of a master-statesman; Jeremiah protests and complains, warns and pleads in the streets of the doomed city; far off in Babylon, among the hopeless exiles, Ezekiel comforts with words of cheer. The prophets are alive again. The critics have breathed into them, and they have become living souls.

Patience, courage, and devotion—these three have spread alarms throughout the land, and the saints are in dismay. They halt between many opinions and know not what to believe. The faith of their fathers is not living still, but has perished by the fire and sword of the critics. To them criticism seems synonymous with atheistic surgery. It brings visions of scissor clippings and a shorn Bible. What was learned at mother's knee seems to be no longer true, and they are of all men most miserable, and without hope in the world. What is the preacher to do? To his people this "new" Bible is a rock of offense, and they beseech him to stand by the old paths. What is the preacher to do? To be silent he cannot. The clamor for help forbids it. To keep to the old Bible he cannot. That contradicts all that he has learned to be true. And he is the ambassador of truth. To this end was he called, and to this end was he ordained—that he might bear witness to the truth. And his people are in alarm lest there be no truth. What is the preacher to do? Patience, courage, and devotion have wrought this bewilderment among his people, but patience, courage, and devotion can rebuild the foundations of faith. With these the preacher must become expositor of "the point"—not of verses and passages merely, but of whole sections, stories, and books. The critics have found the point, and the preacher must not suffer it to be lost. He must explain the point. The Bible is still intact. Not a book, not a page, not a character is missing. To be sure, the animals no longer walk up Noah's gangplank two by two, but the point—

history is a monumental witness to its truth that every vile civilization is destroyed forever. Eden's apple has rotted, but Eden is not ancient history. One can see it reacted on any street, at any time of any day. What is the point? The preacher must ask and answer. Job and Jonah have meaning, but who in the congregation can say what it is? Children marvel at the Fiery Furnace and the Den of Lions, but when they are become men and have put away childish things, do they know exactly what these stories mean? The Gospels of Good News, with Peter sinking in the sea, the crazy demon cured, the hungry throng at picnic on the Mount, and the winsome lass of Jairus alive—we have all thrilled at these stories, but who, who can put their point, put it in a single sentence, and put it clear? The preacher is called, called to take up the critic's Bible and, being baptized with fire, to declare the deep things of God, and with patience, courage, and devotion lead the congregation into all truth. And he dare do not otherwise, for only so can comfort come to honest hearts in distress. These people are in turmoil. Their familiar Bible has become a strange book, speaking a strange tongue, and they cannot understand its gibberish. They are sore dismayed. The Bible seems to have been crucified and buried, and they stand without the tomb weeping, "They have taken away our Bible, and we know not where they have laid it." Then the preacher must appear unto them saying, "It is not here, *it is risen!*" And from the risen, glorified Bible they shall hear the familiar voice of their God, musical with the accent of Jesus.